



VENUE



ISSUE FOUR
(ALWAYS) FREE

*We acknowledge the Noongar people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate
and we support Aboriginal people's struggle for self-determination.*

WE AIM TO PROVOKE, EDUCATE AND INSPIRE.

WE SUPPORT COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

WE BELIEVE IN SOLIDARITY, AND DIRECT ACTION.

JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND FREEDOM.

WE BELIEVE THAT ETHNICITY, GENDER, ABILITY, SEXUALITY

AND AGE ARE NOT LEGITIMATE DETERMINANTS OF

WE OPPOSE ALL FORMS OF HIERARCHY. VALUE AND WORTH.

WE OPPOSE

POLITICAL PARTIES AND BUREAUCRACIES.

WE SEEK INPUT FROM OUR READERS.



yours unruly,

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UNNAMED

collective

DEADLINE for the next issue is 11th December. Material will be printed anonymously by request. If you are writing anything longer than 3,000 words, please consult with the editors before submitting.

If you want to receive Avenue regularly in the mail, please send us your mailing details. Avenue will always be free, but we always appreciate donations. Avenue will always be mailed free to any prisoners on request.

Front page: Citrus Knightshade

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Up Your Avenue

The Unnamed Collective would like to invite you, dear readers to show us the most imaginative way you can think of to transform issue 4 of Avenue. The idea is that you actually read the paper first, but your entry into this extremely non-competitive competition will not include a comprehension test....just send a high resolution photo of your contribution to: avenue.perth@gmail.com

Some examples of the innovative things our readers already do with the paper are: (but are by no means limited to) using Avenue as a tablecloth, a petticoat, kitty-litter liner and as a switch to beat the naughty little bottoms of the CEOs of the world's worst corporations who just love to hang out in sunny Perth. So send us a photo of your most creative Avenue transmogrification and a postal address. The contributor of our favourite entry will receive a surprising and exciting booty, including the next 6 issues of the paper posted out to you.

Over to you. And remember, there are no dead-ends, only more Avenues.

DONATE: We appreciate any financial support we receive from our readers. You can deposit directly to our account.

Unnamed Collective
Bendigo Bank
BSB 633 000
Account number 145 456 943

ACTIVATE!

These are some Perth Activist groups we know and support. If you know of others please let us know.

Deaths In Custody Watch Committee	deathsincustody.org.au
Refugee Rights Action Network	rran.org
Feminist Action Network	feministactionnetwork.org
Forest Rescue	forestrescue.com.au
Industrial Workers of the World	iww.org.au
Indymedia	perthindymedia.org
Ban Uranium Mining Permanently	ufc@ccwa.org.au
Occupy Perth	occupyperth.org
Perth Zine Collective	perthzinecollective.com
Progressive Podcast	progressivepodcastaustralia.com
Sea Shepherd	seashepherd.org/australia

When anarchist households go bad ...

'What happened to the container for the cleaning gear?'

'It was dirty, so I threw it out.'



'Why didn't you just clean it?'

'I don't understand. Clean it? What do you mean?'

SEND US YOUR NEWS AND EVENTS

If you are doing something interesting please let us know. We want your stories as long as they are consistent with our editorial policies.

Save the Kimberley (from the Aborigines?)

Colonialist attitudes in the environmental movement

The campaign by various environmentalists against the gas plant at James Price Point in the Kimberley carries some disturbing baggage, part of which is a long-term problem across the whole of Australia which stems from a simple philosophical error made when the Tasmanian Wilderness Society was formed in the early eighties. There is no such thing as wilderness in Australia, in the sense of an environment that has not been changed by humans.

Every single part of Australia is a human-made environment, made the way it is (or, more correctly, was) by tens of thousands of years of deliberate human intervention by scores of Aboriginal cultures across the entire continent. So to talk of pristine environments is specifically to exclude and ignore discussion of what Aboriginal people did in what is now Australia. To do it out of ignorance would be bad enough, but the environment movement can no longer legitimately claim this ignorance, if it ever could. So the exclusion of Aboriginal histories from Australian landscapes is simply colonialist.

But there is a more insidious, and even less defensible, double colonialism at play here. By talking of pristine wilderness, environmentalists confirm the historic and the continuing exclusion of Aboriginal people from their lands. It can only look like a wilderness if you ignore the fact that the absence of people living in it is not an accident, it is the result of violent dispossession and exclusion. This dispossession is not an act that happened once, two hundred years ago. It is a continuing history and a daily fact of life, repeated again and again for Aboriginal people. To talk of wilderness is to actively assent to the Aboriginal peoples' continued and continuing daily exclusion from their lands.

Some people try to talk about pristine Aboriginal land, but this is simply absurd. If it's Aboriginal land then it has been made, as a landscape, by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people. The illusion of wilderness is only made possible by a refusal to recognise the fact of exclusion.

And a third layer of colonialism comes into play when environmentalists talk about supporting the Aboriginal 'community' against the gas project. The Kimberley Land Council voted for the project. Now, whether you think this is a good thing or not, by supporting one section of the Aboriginal population against another, and calling them 'the community', white activists have effectively asserted that they know what's best for Aboriginal people, and the Kimberley Land Council and all the Aboriginal people in the Kimberley who support the project need to be educated by white folks about what's in the best interests of Kimberley Aborigines. This is despite the Kimberley Land Council being more directly democratic than any mainstream white environmentalist organisation.

It isn't really relevant that the process that led to the KLC voting for the project was flawed and involved what were more-or-less coercion and threats from the state government. KLC decided that there were enough benefits from the project that they agreed to it. It is true that the decision was made within a colonial moment where coercive forces of both economic and governmental nature were exerting pressure to force the KLC to agree and effectively assimilate them as tame Aborigines. Nevertheless, environmentalists opposed to the project are inevitably saying: they need help to understand, we know better, we know which faction is the true Aboriginal population, they don't know what's best for them, they don't know their environment, they need our help. This is colonialism, pure and simple. It may not be what they want to be saying, but it is inescapable that that is what is being said. It cannot be unsaid in the context of Australian history.

So, a challenge for all white environmentalists when confronted by a decision made by Aboriginal people that you don't like: er, had it occurred to you to just shut up and stay out of it? Just what can possibly be good politics about Wadjellas picking sides in what are essentially disputes between Aboriginal groups? I'm not proposing that Wadjellas should be silent about every decision made by Aboriginal people about their place in capitalist Australia. I am saying it needs to be done with much more care and respect about the historical forces which Aboriginal people are responding to.

I don't support the gas project. But I'm not about to tell Wayne Burgmann and the Kimberley Land Council that they don't understand what's best for Kimberley Aborigines.

Mar Bucknell



Yardstock

You gotta fight for ya right to party

It's easy to feel like 'the only anarchist in the village' in Perth, Western Australia. Despite many families living in hardship, institutionalised racism, widespread homophobia and the patriarchal violence evident the world over, the fact is, this city is within the wealthiest five percent of the world. As a result, struggles for social change are isolated and often carried by the same few dedicated activists and it is difficult to garner any support for anything marginally 'political'. In such a circumstance it is hard not to become cynical or even develop a resentment toward the evidently privileged population. Many drop out, fall into hedonistic abandon, focus on their own lives (which can be as revolutionary as any other action) or simply pack up and move east.

There are many reasons to struggle in Perth. While we live in an economically privileged city the effects of this are not entirely positive (if at all). The inflation caused by the mining boom has made the cost of living ridiculous and more importantly the affluence has led to an inevitable gentrification of space and culture. There are very few alternative arts and music venues, in fact I could list the four or five places in which you could see live original music. Similarly there are few galleries available for up-and-coming artists. This situation is gradually improving but as with all things the spaces come with a cost, whether it be the ten dollar pints of beer or the thousand dollar a week fee for hiring a space. Meanwhile the arts and music scene is booming, not a week goes by that I don't come across someone doing something new and interesting hiding within the humble loins of our city.

It is within this context that two friends and myself decided to begin organising Yardstock. The idea was and still is simple enough — local original bands in backyards in and around Perth for free. In order to keep it interesting and neighbour-friendly every backyard would only have one



photo by Amber Bateup

or two bands perform before people moved on to the next house. So the word went out on the social media and two weeks later on a sunny Saturday afternoon in a garage in North Perth, Yardstock was born.

Yardstock 1.0 was an incredible day of music, conversations, dancing, mutual aid, smiles, laughs, anarchy and quite a lot of drinking. No one knew what to expect but already by the second house the numbers had swollen to close to 200 people. There was very little aggression and, as far as I saw, none of the usual misogynistic, macho bullshit that is far too common in bars and pubs in Perth — everyone I spoke to said they felt free. As to be expected the police did show up twice but only as the houses were finishing and people moved on. All in all, it felt like the beginning of something wonderful with many people commenting that it was one of the best things to happen to Perth for sometime. Personally, I felt and still do feel that this has a lot to do with participation. When you feel a sense of ownership over an event, movement or any action you feel responsibility for it and a sense of comradeship and belonging, something that we all crave. In a way Yardstock could be compared to the UK's early pirate radio stations, just by tuning in you were breaking the law and thus you were the pirate. Similarly the rave culture of the 90s and the ongoing doof scene carries the same feeling of participation. By attending you are not just a witness you are a participant, Yardstock belongs to everyone.

After the success of the first Yardstock it was inevitable that we would organise another and thus Yardstock 2.0 kicked off in Northbridge at Noise Pollution Records on another beautiful sunny Saturday afternoon. The second was expanded to include six yards and fourteen bands. By the third house the crowd was massive and aside from a brief



photo by Amber Bateup

run-in with local gang members who didn't appreciate a free gig kicking off on their territory, the day ran smoothly. This was until the other local bullies intervened. Just as Zeks were about to play at the fifth yard at roughly 8pm the police entered the property and demanded that all noise cease. The officers present threatened the tenants with a five thousand dollar fine if the gig wasn't shut down immediately. To repeat, this was at 8pm on a Saturday evening close to the city centre. There had been no 'anti-social' behaviour and, as far as we could determine, only one noise complaint by a neighbour who later explained that he was worried that the noise would go on into the early hours of the morning and after we had spoken to him was fine for Yardstock to continue. In order to not provoke a negative response or put anyone in danger we decided to move on to the next house but unfortunately the police followed and fifteen minutes into Ham Jam's set this house was shut down as well.

By attending you are not just a witness you are a participant, Yardstock belongs to everyone.

Having organised countless backyard parties and gigs in Perth I was sincerely shocked. I had thought that the law was, so long as loud noise ceased by 10pm, the police could not or at least would not shut down the party unless there was reasonable excuse to do so (damage to property, danger to the community etc). But little did I know that the law was about to change and this particular weekend the police were cracking down on 'out-of-control parties'.

Under the legislation introduced into state parliament on September 25th (the Monday after Yardstock 2.0), "an out-of-control gathering must have: 12 or more people attending; at least two of those people engaging in criminal conduct, for example, disorderly behaviour; and, that conduct must cause or be likely to cause fear or alarm, or substantial interference with the lawful activities or peaceful enjoyment of the surrounding areas." If someone is found to have organised such a gathering they would face a maximum penalty of twelve months jail and a fine of twelve thousand dollars (as well as any costs of the police operation).

Now, it does not take a natural-born radical to realise how potentially draconian this legislation is. In combination with stop and search laws, move-on notices and other such powers given to WA police in recent years it allows the police to act with complete discretion in determining what is and what is not legal. For example, a party of twenty people in which someone pees on a tree in their front yard or disobeys a police directive and a 17-year-old has a beer could result in the 'organiser' of the party being charged and sentenced to a year in prison. While this may sound unlikely, one does not have to look far to find countless examples of police abusing their power and thus such powers should be a concern for us all.

In the context of Yardstock the pre-emptive actions of the police at Yardstock 2.0 were effective in creating a sense of fear in the community and many were worried that any future Yardstocks would be shut down before they had a



photo by Amber Bateup

chance to begin. Now, while I am certainly no conspiracy theorist and wouldn't even begin to entertain the thought that the laws were designed to target events such as Yardstock, the laws do further demonstrate the control and gentrification of space in Perth. The message is clear: if you want to have fun, do it in one of the designated areas that are heavily controlled and ensure your money goes back to the major venues in the 'entertainment districts'. Of course, this is then contradicted by the constant reporting of violent behaviour in Northbridge and Fremantle. So, have fun but pay your money and if you step out of line we'll arrest you.

Thankfully, there are enough people in Perth who've had their fair share of run-ins with the law and organised enough events to not be intimidated. So on another lovely Saturday afternoon in the beautiful surrounds of South Beach Yardstock 2.5 kicked off. We had decided to keep the event to predominantly one house where we knew the neighbours and could liaise with the local community. Thanks to this and possibly Fremantle being generally more friendly to these sort of events Yardstock 2.5 was a huge success. The day went off without a hitch and importantly, not one visit from the police. Once again the reports filtering in are that everyone enjoyed themselves and felt as though they were a part of something big.

In reality Yardstock is not political and even in regard to the 'out-of-control party' laws we do not intend to protest or react against the state's draconian madness. But nevertheless Yardstock is a movement, a change in consciousness. It provides people a space to be free, to enjoy themselves without the sanctions of the state or corporations and it proves the point that we can and must organise ourselves independently.

Music has always played a massive role in social change, from the 60s counter-culture movements to underground raves. It unites us and reminds us of our own common humanity. And perhaps most importantly for me, when I am lost in the moment of playing, dancing or listening, when I am in what is often referred to as 'the zone', I feel completely free and this freedom is revolutionary. For, as The International Noise Conspiracy once declared, "unfettered creativity is one of the most powerful manifestations of subversion possible, for it offers us all a taste of freedom."

Raymond Grenfell

The Humanitarian Crisis in Sri Lanka

There is a humanitarian crisis in the Tamil areas in Sri Lanka, and increasingly in the Sinhala South. So of what concern is that to us in Australia?

Firstly, human rights violations are no longer an 'internal affair' of the country in question. That is why the world intervened on apartheid South Africa, despite apartheid being very much an 'internal affair' of that country. Secondly, there is fall-out in other countries, for example, Australia, as desperate people flee murderous regimes and seek asylum. It is mandatory that Australia looks at the problems in these countries that make people risk their lives by getting into leaking boats that can, and do, sink.

The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) claims that Tamil terrorism has been crushed and the (Tamil) people 'liberated'. There are now 'happy smiling faces' in the Tamil areas. If so, why does the government of Sri Lanka still refuse to allow Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group access to the Tamil area, indeed to any part of Sri Lanka?

The fact is that Sri Lanka is run by a brutal totalitarian regime that tolerates no opposition. The Tamil areas are under the Sinhalese military, which treats the people and their property as 'the spoils of war', to be used and abused at will. The military are everywhere in the north and east. They have taken over all civilian duties, trade, businesses, the lot. It is not even possible to have a social function such as a marriage or even a funeral without the military being informed. This applies even to religious meetings and school events. It is an intrusion into civilian life as has never been seen before in any civilised country.

The Sri Lankan Armed forces, 175,000 strong, during the 'war' (the largest per capita in any country in the world) was expanded to 230,000 after the war was won by the GoSL. There is even a call to expand this to 300,000. If the Tamil Tigers have been crushed and the war won, who is the enemy? The 'new enemy' is anyone who questions what the GoSL is doing to its people — Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims. With the government stranglehold on the media, the world hears only what the GoSL wants it to hear — much of it devoid of an iota of truth. Unsurprisingly, credible international human rights groups are not allowed into the country.

This article does not address the numerous and escalating problems in that country. What it does is give the briefest outline and points to where further information can be obtained.

It is crucial to appreciate the 'agenda' of the GoSL which is to make multi-ethnic, multicultural, multireligious, multilingual Sri Lanka into a Sinhala-Buddhist nation. In such a nation, there can be no place for non-Sinhalese (i.e. Christians, Hindus and Muslims). They have to be eliminated or made non-people. I must stress that I am a Sinhalese from the majority community and not a brutalised Tamil from the minority community.

This blatant Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-religious chauvinism is demanded by the politically-active Buddhist monks, and exploited by politicians to get the support of the Sinhalese (74%) of the country, and Buddhists (70%). It is political opportunism, pure and simple.

Democracy has been dismantled and replaced by a politico-fascist dictatorship that has drifted to something darker — a totalitarian state under one family — President Rajapaksa, his three brothers, son and numerous relatives. Parliament has been made into a rubber stamp of no real consequence. It merely stamps what it is ordered to stamp by the executive president with more power than any other head of state in any country.

Governance has collapsed and has been replaced by the rule of armed thugs with the government's blessing. The rule of law has been replaced by the rule of the Rajapaksas and their stooges. The judiciary and the legal system have become irrelevant. The president rules all, parliament and the judiciary included. There is certainly no 'separation of powers'. Corruption is rampant going all the way to the very top. The police are reportedly the most corrupt in the world. Bribery is a 'way of life' — nothing can be done without a bribe — often to the ruling junta.

The Tamils in the north and east have been denied the most basic human rights which even includes the right to not to be killed. There is an epidemic of rape of Tamil women and girls by the Sinhalese armed forces and the Sinhalese who have been brought there from the south to work on various 'projects'. The Tamils are there as spectators. They just watch things happening around them — their land going, Sinhalese being brought from the south en masse and settled in lands which were once theirs, their agriculture and fishing jobs being given to the Sinhalese and women and girls being raped. A rape occurs every five hours on average. The data is backed by Wikileaks. Jaffna, once the cultural capital of the Tamils is now the rape capital.





Hundreds of Tamils are being held in jails and detention centres (outside the regular jails) without charge or trial. Some have been there for years. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have repeatedly expressed concern at this in multiple publications that they have released on the topic. The situation is dreadfully serious, which is why these organisations are not allowed to go anywhere near the place, peace or no peace. Not surprisingly, suicide in the Tamil areas is at an all-time high.

The law in Sri Lanka has been replaced by the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), modelled on the laws in apartheid South Africa. The Tamil Tiger 'terrorists' may have been crushed, but the PTA goes on. Human rights organisations worldwide have repeatedly protested about this.

The country is heavily in debt because of blatant stealing by politicians and their henchmen, and payment to the ever-increasing armed forces. The current debt-service payment exceeds the total income of the country. The answer is to get more loans from whoever is prepared to lend, at whatever

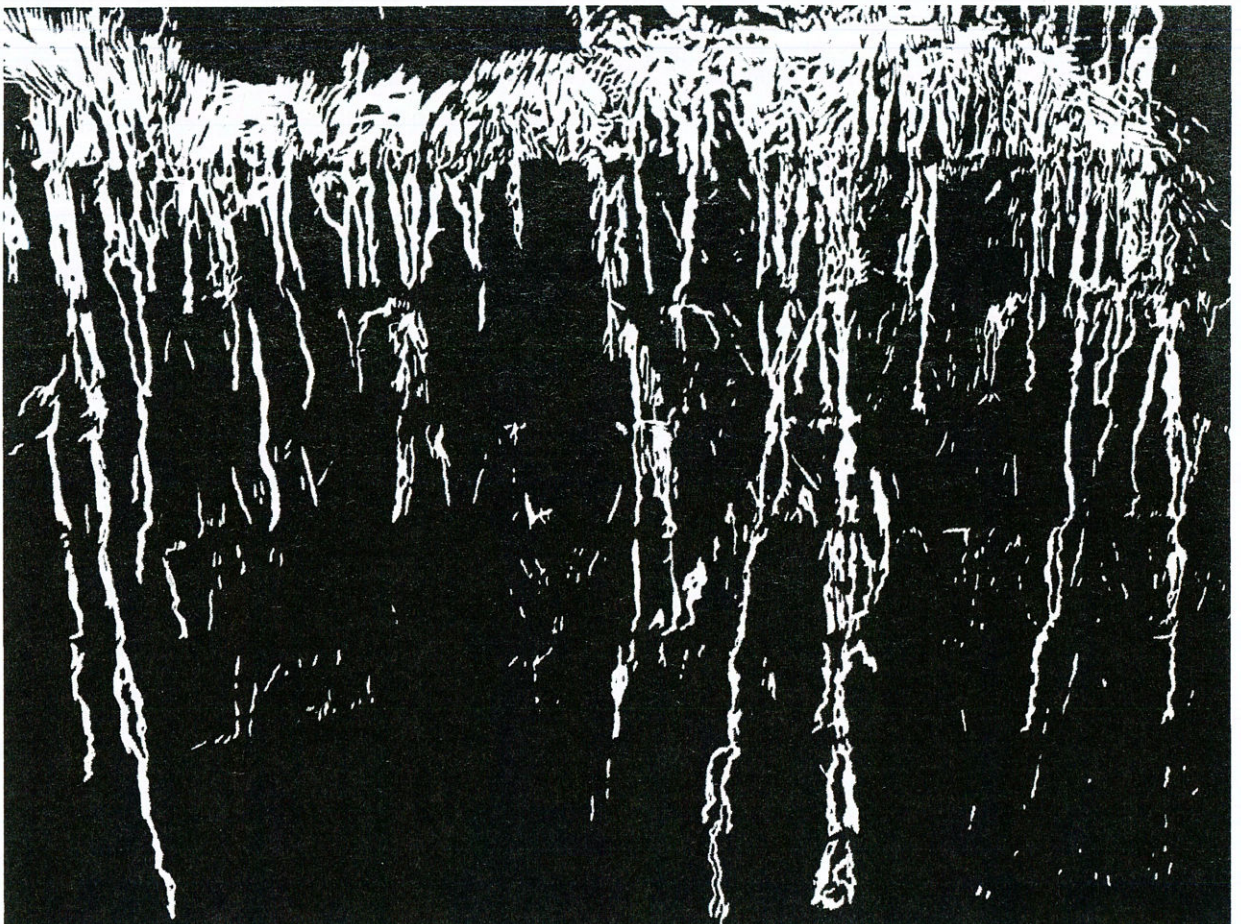
rate. The only answer the government has is violence — state terrorism which is unleashed with no accountability. Additionally, the country is being parcelled up and sold — to China, India and whoever wants a piece of it.

There are basically two wars going on in Sri Lanka currently: the Sinhalese government's war on the Tamils to make Sri Lanka into a Sinhala-Buddhist nation and an 'international' war (or rather game) involving China, India and the US to get a foot-hold in Sri Lanka for geopolitical gains and trade. US Admiral Mahar said a hundred years ago, 'Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia.' There is no better place to control the Indian Ocean than Sri Lanka. Just as oil is the 'problem' in the Middle East, it is Sri Lanka's geographical position astride the Indian Ocean that is the 'problem'.

Australia has options on how it can react to the current situation in Sri Lanka. Firstly, question what the Sri Lankan government is doing to its people and open its doors to desperate people fleeing a murderous regime.

Turning back the boats or blocking them should not be an option for signatories to the United Nations Refugee Convention. If Australia wants to treat asylum seekers as criminals, then it will first have to quit the Refugee Convention, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It cannot sign these international undertakings and then violate them. If it does, protest we must and will.

Dr Brian Senewiratne



'mishima' by Julian Concepcion

The First English Word We Learned Was 'Racist'

*A speech from the Yongah Hill Detention Centre
Convergence near Northam by a refugee, about the time
he spent in Christmas Island.*

Hi everyone, my name is [random letters and numbers], that's what I used to be called in the detention, [random letters and numbers]. Being next to this detention centre just reminded me of how I was in the Christmas Island detention. I don't know which words should I use to describe that experience ... should I use terrible? It was really — very, very bad — extremely bad. Being in somewhere you've never done anything wrong, and you're locked up ... and you run away from your country, from the place where is your family — looking for freedom — then — when you — the first time you put your step in Christmas Island, you say, hey, I am free now, like, you know, almost now I am free, then unfortunately you are locked up for a year or something like this there. And ... it's like prison, it is a prison, it is not detention.

Everything — everything is like, the doors are locked, you can't go through any door if you don't have an officer next to you, even the medical area. The medical area should be like for if someone is sick or he needs just treatment and ... that door ... I just remember very well — it was that thick. It's very, very bad to be there even afterwards — I never had any problem, mental problem — even in Christmas Island — but I had, um, somehow a sleeping problem, I couldn't like sleeping more than two hours, like continuously. So two hours, wake up, then do something, then another two hours. Afterwards when I came to Australia — the mainland — and I am free — I shouldn't have that problem because I don't worry about anything but still I have that problem for a while for like the first six or first seven months there.

The main issue there is you're locked up and everyone is depressed, you just see your friends go, you make friend today — next day is gone. You don't know, he's just in the midnight, suddenly he is gone, he's just like, next day you are looking for him then suddenly, you can't find him because he has been transferred somewhere else.

Every week or every couple of days you will witness someone hang himself and that will like bring you down and already the detention is like kind of hell — you know I never been to hell — but it is hell. You know if you are somewhere in the hell and you want to climb up, you want to get out, but somehow, who runs that detention say, get down, that's your place, it's not up. It's like every time you try to be better healthier, somewhere to do something good they say get down that's your place, up is not your place.

Um, personally, I witnessed three people, they commit suicide, you know one of them they, uh, Sri Lankan guy,

poor guy, he is died. He commit suicide by his bed, um, his bed sheets, um, and he make like rope or something and he hang himself up, with somewhere very high. Just ask yourselves what kind of motivation he had to go all the way up just to hang himself and kill himself. And he was one of my friends, he had like problem like staying there for long time and depressed and he ended with, why am I here? Like what's the end? Let's just finish it, let's kill myself and that's it.

I never thought about these things in my life, but when I was in Christmas Island I thought about it once and thank god I didn't do anything like this. But there are heaps of people who do it around you, all your friends think about it, all your friends are depressed, if you are trying your best to be like positive, you cannot because your friends who runs the detention, like total negative and racist. Totally racist ...

I would say thank you for every single man and woman who came here. I really, really, really appreciate it, appreciate it that you support my case and my friends' case. And I just I talk you about one thing, I remember one of the time we did a protest at Christmas Island and some people they did it in Sydney, we couldn't see them because they are far away but we saw them, we saw some photos over the internet and we were so happy, we were so happy. Like okay, not all of them racist, there is some of them there, they like us, they want us and say okay, okay, some of us say okay I'm going to like fight and stay healthy, maybe one day I get my visa.

And by the way, one of the first English words we have learned there is 'racist'. Um, so please, please, please show us if you are welcome us, show us. I swear to god you give us heaps of motivation to stay alive, we don't hang ourselves, we don't hang ourselves, we don't commit suicide inside the detention. We say okay this country, the government don't like us maybe, but the people like us. So and finally we will get in.



Three Years of Hell: Rex Bellotti Jnr

Rex Bellotti Jnr was fifteen years old when a police four-wheel drive struck him grievously near midnight on a March night in 2006. In an unfettered debacle since the tragic event, the Western Australian police have refused to admit adequate culpability and the now 18-year-old is still waiting for the State Insurer's payout.

I have written over 70,000 words on this young man and of the incident that wrecked many of his dreams. I have come to know his parents quite well and his five younger siblings; however, I had never met Rex. I knew him from the suite of police reports, crash investigation file documents, third-party witness statements, affidavits, the Corruption and Crime Commission report and other information I immersed myself in. His family have protected him from the glare of public scrutiny and from the news media. They have stood alongside him during tempests of grief, during tortuous mental anguish and at all times they protected him from any prospect of public meltdowns. At all times they have put his welfare first.

I drove to the home of an extended family member Rex has been staying with during the last couple of months, where I picked up Rex and his partner Erica and we went out for a meal and for some conversation. He was glad to meet me and I was glad to meet him.

'I miss not being able to play football (Australian Rules). I loved football and had hoped to go professional. I can still kick the ball with my right leg but I can't with my left. I am not allowed to run. If I do run it may cause harm to my left leg and if it starts to bleed the doctors say I have only one hour to get to hospital to save my life. I don't run,' he said.

I asked him about the events on the night of the incident, after he had left a wake to walk home along Old Lower King Road in his hometown of Albany. 'I remember what I was doing. I was having a smoke while walking along the road. There were three girls walking along with me. They

were about 13 to 15 years old. We began to cross the road, it was dark, and as we were walking towards the middle of the road all of a sudden out of nowhere I saw headlights coming at us. It was split-second stuff.

'They looked like high beams. I pushed the girls out of the way. They would have been hit, for sure. I did the right thing in saving them. I didn't make it out of the way. The car came fast. I remember all that well enough.'

I asked him what he remembered after being hit by the police four-wheel drive. 'I don't remember much, I think I was conscious for about ten seconds, I went in and out and then out altogether.' He doesn't remember being taken to Albany Hospital nor does he remember being flown by the Royal Flying Doctor to Perth. He woke up in Royal Perth Hospital. 'The scariest part for me wasn't the hospital, it was the rehabilitation. It was the toughest time of my life trying to get my leg working again.'

'When the police car hit me they snapped both my legs but my left leg is the worry now. The police car snapped my right leg at the femur and my left leg hung together by an artery. They say if it gets hurt then there's the prospect of an amputation.'

I asked Rex how he felt about the police officers who did this to him and how he felt about police in general. 'I hate cops with a passion. I can't forgive those cops for what they did. I don't trust them,' he said. 'I understand that they didn't help me while I was lying there. They never came to the hospital to see if I was alright. They have never taken the time in more than three years to check on me or contact me. I don't know what they look like, they have never given me a minute's worth. They have never admitted the full extent of what they did to me that night. How can I trust police when they're like this?'

'I hate cops with a passion. I can't forgive those cops for what they did. I don't trust them'

A week before the interview Rex and some friends were spoken to by a couple of local police officers. The officers asked questions about 'a person of interest' they were looking for. Rex told one officer of the incident that mangled his legs. 'He was shocked when I showed him my leg. He said, "Did we do that?"'

I asked Rex what he thought of that particular police officer. He was taken aback by the question, and while reminding me of his mother's soulful glances he looked up at me, looked over my shoulder and then flickered his eyes back to me, and then spoke with the odd pause between sentences. 'Actually, I didn't hate him, he seemed to be quite a good person despite being a cop. He didn't pack on anything like other smart-arse cops looking to get us in trouble. There were none of the usual smart-arse comments and smirks.'





... says 'We won't abuse any new stop and search powers any more than we abuse any other powers we ... er ... let me rephrase that ...'

Rex began to rub his leg and I asked him if he was alright. 'Yeah, I'm alright, it's just the pins, the screws and rods in my leg. On a cold day like today I feel them more than usual.'

More than a year ago Rex spent a summer with relatives in Western Australia's north-west, to try and dissociate from the grief. In Carnarvon, he met Erica Atherton, 17, and they have been together ever since. Rex and Erica are inseparable. 'I like everything about Rex, he's a good person. What the police did to him, and then not admit it, that's just wrong. What happened to Rex, that was wrong, just wrong,' said Erica. 'Rex and I have never argued, we are always at ease, he's a calm guy, he's cool.'

Rex remains solidly close with his family. 'My family is pretty home-bound, so I go from time to time to visit them. I am close with all my brothers and sister.'

I asked him about the future. 'I have to wait. It's been more than three years and I haven't received the insurance and compensation. That's wrong but I'll wait. Then I'll buy a house with the money. I don't know how long they are going to take but hopefully not as much time as has passed since what they did to me. They took away my football, and I didn't finish high school because of them. They need to let us get on with our lives. I don't expect justice, I don't expect the cops to get honest but I am glad that many people have learned the truth, that you have been writing about what happened to me so cops think twice next time it happens.'

'I haven't read everything you have written, you have written so much, I get tired but I am glad that my people throughout Australia know the truth and that every corner of Australia has at least heard of what the police did to me. I can't forgive them but I won't let them mess me up and get me down.'

This is the first and only time Rex has given an interview.

Gerry Georgatos

Great Moments in Anarchist History

Kate Sharpley Assaults the Queen

In 1917, Queen Mary was awarding medals in Greenwich, England for British soldiers killed in the First World War, the medals being presented to their surviving female relatives. A 22-year-old woman, said by the press to be 'under the influence of anarchist propaganda' — in other words, an anarchist activist — collected medals for her dead father, brother and boyfriend, and then threw them in the Queen's face, saying, 'If you think so much of them, you can keep them.'



The Queen's face was scratched and so was that of one of her attendant ladies. The police grabbed the woman and beat her up. When she was released from custody a few days later, without being charged, she was scarcely recognisable.

The woman was Kate Sharpley, who had been active in the Woolwich anarchist group and helped keep it going through the difficult years of the war. She worked in a munitions factory and was active in the shop stewards' movement. Her father and brother were killed in action and her boyfriend was listed as missing believed killed, though she suspected he had been shot for mutiny.

Anarchist libraries in London, England and Berkeley, California are named after Kate Sharpley.

Information from www.katesharpleylibrary.net and Wikipedia

The Spiral of Mind-Bending Irony

Tye the Guy

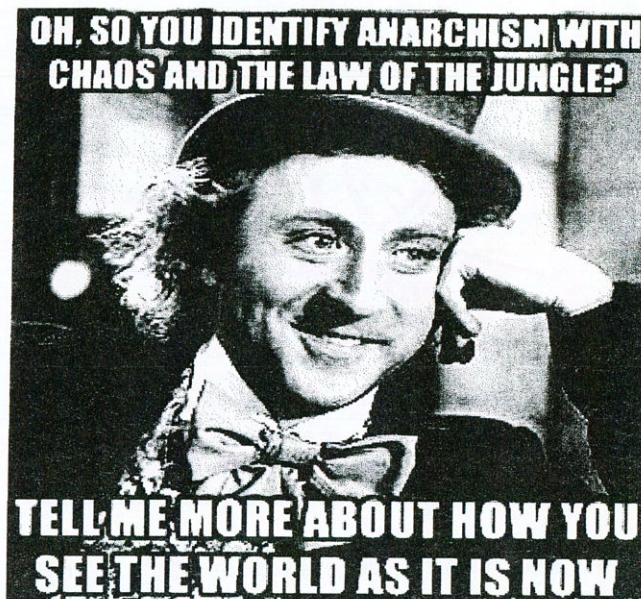
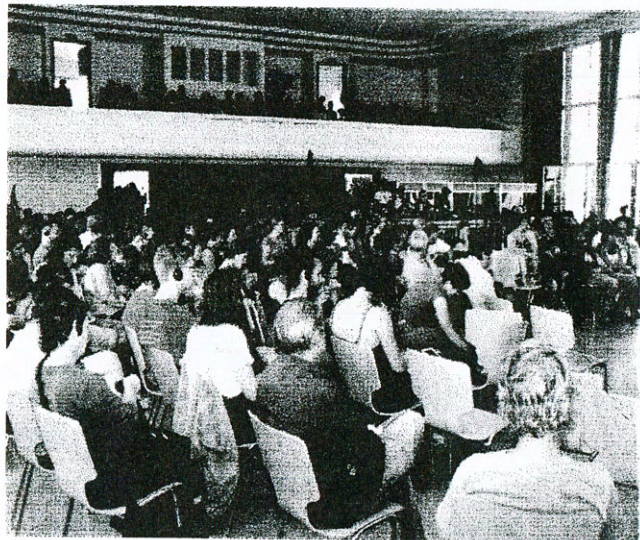
A fear of death ----->
 promotes a Faith ----->
 which influences government ----->
 to tie scientists hands ----->
 and with them our understanding ----->
 into substances made illegal ----->
 that are capable of producing states ----->
 of seamless paradox and love ----->
 which serve to drive away the death-fear ----->
 that sets The Spiral spinning

St Imier: The Flame Burns On

August saw a gathering of a couple of thousand anarchists from all over the globe in St Imier, Switzerland to commemorate the founding of the Anarchist International in 1872. The gathering involved dozens of political, organisational and cultural events. As part of this gathering, Anarkismo, the Irish section of the WSM (Workers Solidarity Movement), held both a European conference and a global gathering.

For this 140th anniversary of the founding of the Anarchist International the organisers had arranged to hire all the large spaces in the town as well as using the Espace Noir social centre. The Funicular was hired to run participants to and from the campsite above the town. Every bar, restaurant and patch of shade became the location of dozens of spontaneous exchanges between the hundreds, or even thousands, who had come to St Imier. It is very hard to know how many were present as the eight formal venues were spread throughout the town and there were hotels, a squat and sport facilities being used in addition to the three campsites. The organisers expected between one and three thousand people; some media reports said that more than that arrived. One of the key organisers said that they thought 4,000 people had attended over the weekend. They had spent €50,000 on travel costs of anarchists from the global south, so there was a significant number of anarchists from Africa and South America there, as well as a few from Asia.

The anarchist movement is not a single unified body, rather there are a number of different formal and informal tendencies based around politics, organisational methods and sub-culture. The overall gathering at St Imier was designed to include all these tendencies, but many of them used the fact that so many had travelled there to have their own internal meetings during the five days. In the case of the WSM, we are part of the Anarkismo network which brings together about thirty organisations in Africa, Europe, North and South America and Oceania. Just over half of these organisations had members at St Imier, allowing the holding of both the annual conference of delegates from the European Anarkismo co-ordination and for a less formal but still very business-like global Anarkismo meeting.



In addition members of Anarkismo groups gave presentations both in the Anarkismo tent and at many of the other venues. The closing meeting at St Imier saw the OSL present a statement to over 600 people who had crammed into the hall. It also heard a statement from the International of Anarchist Federations (IFA) and about fifteen contributions from the floor. Right at the start of this session the organisers made space for various groups that wanted to make critical remarks about various aspects of the conference to deliver prepared statements. These statements varied from serious contributions on the gender imbalance of some of the panels to constant interventions from the floor, to a defence of some vegans who tried to shut down the barbecue at one of the social centres because they disapproved of people eating meat. Hosting the conference cost a substantial amount of money (we think in the region of €160,000). It seemed that much of the costs were recovered through charging entry to the many music events and through selling beer. This meant the evenings the town took on something of the spirit of a major music festival, including the singing of revolutionary songs on the streets and, in particular, on the late night cable railway running up to the campsites.

The anarchist movement is not a single unified body, rather there are a number of different formal and informal tendencies based around politics, organisational methods and sub-culture.

Despite such problems the organisers of the St Imier Gathering are to be congratulated for organising such a complex event for so many people on a minimal budget. Certainly, if there had been more money and more people putting work into the event some aspects could have been better organised. But really those of us who travelled to St Imier and failed to involve ourselves in advancing the work that needed to be done are more responsible for any

shortcomings than those who put thousands of hours into organising the event. From the WSM's perspective, the various meetings held during the week were a valuable chance to meet comrades whom we might never have met and to reinvigorate our involvement in the Anarkismo network. The network itself is continuing to expand from its very modest beginnings in 2005 in terms of the number of organisations involved, the geographic spread of these organisations and, most importantly, increased co-operation between them. When each organisation gave a presentation of its work on the morning of the global meeting, it was striking just how much of a common political and organisational approach we have despite operating in some very different contexts. It was also clear that the South American organisations, in particular, have seen significant growth in numbers and influence in the last couple of years.

'Anarchists, the flame in your eyes brings warmth to my heart.'

The wider St Imier gathering will not have any major formal outcomes and was never constructed with that intention. But it did bring together a broad section of the anarchist movement and the organisers are to be congratulated, in particular for the effort they made to bring together anarchists from Africa, South and Central America and Asia. Participation should have been broader but the organisers efforts were sabotaged by the refusal of the Swiss government to issue visas to many who were had planned to attend.

During the closing session, a Macedonian anarchist spoke very briefly from the floor summing up the conference with — 'Anarchists, the flame in your eyes brings warmth to my heart.'

'It is high time that anarchism emerged from the swamp of disorganisation, to put an end to the interminable vacillations on the most important questions of theory and tactics, and resolutely move towards its clearly understood purpose and an organised collective practice'.

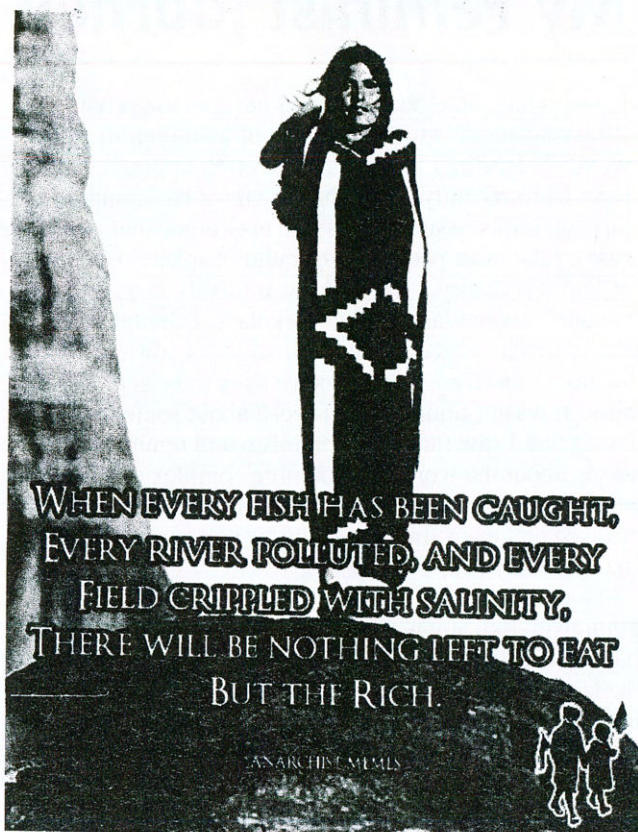
— Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists.

Andrew Flood

BEST HEADLINE EVER?

**Bishops
agree sex
abuse rules**

via Ricky Gervais' Twitter feed



ALMOST THE NEWS...

The Reserve Bank has cut interest rates by a quarter of a per cent. The big four banks have responded quickly. 'The rate of increase of our profits is showing some signs of slowing down,' said a spokethief, 'So we have moved quickly to raise our mortgage lending rates by one per cent. We have no choice here.'

Alan Jones says he has apologised to Julia Gillard in public, but she is being the rude one because she still won't take his phone calls. 'I said in public that it was all someone else's fault. What more does the evil vixen witch want from me?' he said. 'I don't know why anyone thinks I have a problem with women. I have to call things as I see them. It's all about policies and politics, not personalities. The prime minister is a fat ugly bitch, the governor-general is a dried-up old hag and the attorney-general is a pox-ridden slag. These are simply the facts. I apply the same degree of rigorous critique to that fine, noble and supremely intelligent specimen of gorgeous manhood with the perfectly sculpted buttocks that is the leader of the opposition, my hero, Tony Abbott. And now I'm being bullied. Can you believe it? Bullied, I tell you.'

My Feminist Journey

I am a white, able bodied man. I have all the privilege in the world and it is totally congruent with feminism that I would be ignorant of my vast and often oppressive privilege. Until recently, I only had the most basic understanding of feminist issues (and some may argue that is still the case). Like most people in the cultural sphere, ignorant of feminist theory, I thought it was mostly "equality for women", particularly in the workplace. I thought the issue of sexism was done, it was racism, or it was religious ideology: these are the things we have to be active about now. It wasn't until I came to read about some of these issues that I saw that what feminism and feminists have to say about the world is a lot more complex than simply trying to get a woman paid as much as a man. And I realised that even simple equality is nowhere to be seen in day-to-day life.

Feminism, like any worldview, has its own language, and part of learning about that worldview is about learning the language. Terms often used that are further reaching than simple equality, like "oppression", "patriarchy", "hegemony", "domination", "white supremacy" and "capitalist", indicate that feminism is a challenge to the fundamental way we view the world: it is a political movement to change the way we do things. In fact, some feminists, such as bell hooks have argued that the very idea of equality is problematic as not all men are equals in a white supremacist, patriarchal, capitalist society.

It also means that what we come to define as 'normal', or 'equal' becomes what is white, masculine, able-bodied, and associated with other forms of privilege. Moreover the focus on equality, which may have its merits, is often still the goal of white, middle-class, able-bodied feminists, and does not address the concerns of the majority of women. What does this mean exactly? Here 'equality' means that (white, middle-class) women be given the same employment opportunities as men in the workplace, that they might climb corporate ladder. A more thorough feminist critique of this idea would promote a workplace of care, would realise that work does not liberate women from male domination (though economic self-sufficiency does aid women), and would offer a reorganisation of working life so that both men and women can spend more time looking after children and family members. More deeply the feminist critique would show that work can lead to greater self-sufficiency, which may lead to alternative lifestyles counter to the supposed "good life" promoted by capitalist, patriarchal mass media, thereby promoting a life of self respect and self esteem.

Feminism becomes, then, a challenge to men and women, as women can be misogynistic too. In the pop culture bastardisation of feminism we often see simple caricatures that ignore this fact; watch a television show, talk to your average person and see that to them feminism means a woman's power at the expense of a man's. To be a strong woman, you must supplant a man. The idea of a war of the sexes is not what feminism is about, and alienates men from feminist movement. It also, again, supports the

notion of the white middle class "bourgeoisie" setting the tone for feminist movement, at least in the public sphere. This portrayal of feminism is limited, and doesn't reflect the diversity of feminism in practice.

More deeply the feminist critique would show that work can lead to greater self-sufficiency, which may lead to alternative lifestyles counter to the supposed 'good life' promoted by capitalist, patriarchal mass media

How has this influenced my day-to-day life? Do I become involved in activism? Is it enough to write blog posts and raise awareness within my social circle? My moral compass certainly dictates to me that I should be more involved than I have been. There is plenty of work to do in the day-to-day, with issues of class, and race, and gender, and oppression all being lost in the milieu of conversation. For me, becoming aware of feminist issues, and then going about my day has made things problematic, precisely due to my previous point. I've come to realise how much we use the language of subjugation, how often we taunt each other, and oppress each other, with the language of gender roles, with the expectation of gender roles. A man must be a man, must be tough, must be muscular, and must be dominant over women. Similarly, a woman must be submissive, must be passive, and must be a sexual prude, lest she be labelled a slut. And here I sit in the middle of all this oppression now, awoken from the Matrix so to speak, and wondering which battles I must pick with my clients, with my friends, and with my family. Facebook is a great example of this, the amount of slut shaming, the 'liking' of misogynistic pages, and ruthless comments about women's application of make-up, or dress sense, or emotional states, often by other women, is mind-boggling and clearly represents the misogynistic mindset of people uninformed by feminist praxis.

Standing up for feminism, for a view of the world which does not conform to traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, to stand against misogyny, patriarchy, gender roles and other forms of oppression is not easy, and that's why I cut myself some slack on being an out and out activist. Writing blog posts, challenging friends, being challenged by friends and acquaintances, listening to the arguments, changing your positions, and changing others, that is a great first step, and important one. After all, I have people to thank around me who called me on my misogyny, on my subscription to the rhetoric of oppression that I simply hadn't even noticed was part of who I was. You can have that impact too, you just need to speak up.

Rob Bezan

Workers' Co-operatives

Do workers' co-operatives help or hinder the building of a libertarian communist society?

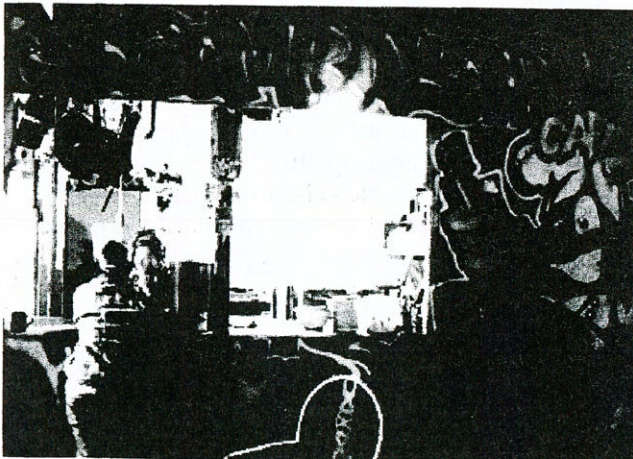
Workers' co-operatives have always been championed by sections of the left and the wider labour movement — from their advocacy by nineteenth-century Welsh social reformer and utopian socialist Robert Owen to Proudhon, through to their existence in various state capitalist countries today such as Cuba. While workers' co-operatives can to a degree demonstrate anarchist ideas of self-management, direct democracy and mutual aid, we should not be naive about their contradictions and we should query their effectiveness as a strategy for real revolutionary transformation.

Support for workers' co-operatives has always been a longstanding feature of anarchism both as a theory and as a revolutionary practice since its emergence within the workers' movement. Anarchists have always stressed the importance of building and supporting schools of struggle and education such as modern schools, social centres and workers' societies — a vibrant public sphere, a kind of counter-spectacle with its own values, ideas, organisations and practices, or, in Gramscian terms, a counter-hegemonic project challenging the dominant ideology of the ruling class. This would be seen as complementing and in tandem with building a wider revolutionary movement that aims to abolish capitalist exploitative relationships and domination.

In short, co-operatives can be a 'germ of the future' and can provide a glimpse of what types of social organisations anarchists favour. As Bakunin argued, 'The co-operative system ... carries within it the germ of the future economic order.' (The Philosophy of Bakunin, p. 385)

What are co-operatives?

There are many different types of co-operatives — from housing co-ops to credit unions and a more business-based model such as the co-operative supermarket which has stores across Ireland. In Northern Ireland the sector has over £2 million in assets and up to 350,000 members, providing employment to perhaps 4,500 people. On a global level the sector employs nearly a billion people while three billion people secure their livelihood through them.



In theory co-operatives are based on 'one worker, one vote'. In other words, those who do the work manage the workplace within which they do it (that means, they are based on some form of workers' self-management). In addition, co-operatives are an example of working class self-help and self-activity. Instead of relying on others to provide work, co-operatives show that production can be carried on without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of order takers.

Numbers

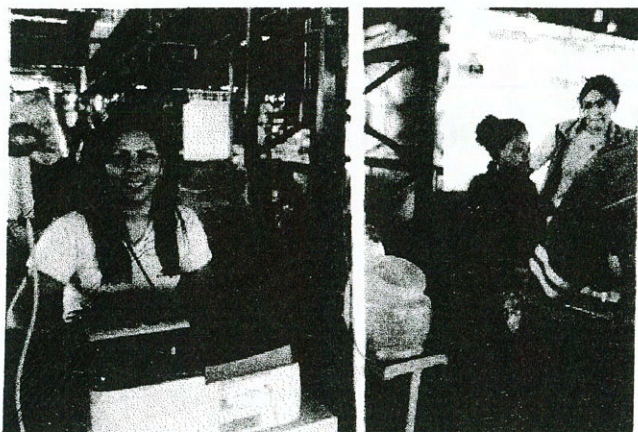
There has been a dramatic increase in the number of producer co-operatives in most Western countries in recent years. Italian co-operatives now number well over 20,000, many of them large and having many support structures as well (which aids their development by reducing their isolation and providing long-term financial support lacking within the capitalist market).

The Basque country is home to the world's largest worker co-operative, the Mondragon group, which is effectively a multinational corporation employing more than 80,000 people across 256 companies, including a university, and has expanded into 18 countries. The company has bounced back from the recession producing a €240 million profit last year and in order to become an owner worker you have to invest €20,000. While the senior manager's pay is capped at nine times the salary of the lowest paid worker, the fact that the world's largest co-operative model has become fully integrated within the capitalist system, becoming a form of 'state sponsored self-managed exploitation', highlights its limitations as a sustainable revolutionary alternative.

Challenging capitalism?

As Joseph Kay, a regular contributor to the popular libcom blog, remarked: 'Workers' co-ops are often seen as hotbeds of radical, anti-capitalist thought. Images of hippies, earnest vegetarians or executives in blue overalls could not, however, be further from reality.'

Indeed, far from challenging capitalism, many workers' co-operatives are actually an important sector of modern economies on the basis of promoting a more 'ethical capitalism'. Workers' co-operatives may provide a catalyst for change and a glimpse of what is possible. However, their gradual and reformist nature must be resisted as not only futile but also as an abstraction from the important battles that need to be waged in our workplaces and communities. In the case of Israel, for example, the co-operative movement formed the backbone of the early Zionist project of colonial expansionism and military occupation.



Yugoslavia under the leadership of Marshal Tito broke with Soviet-style state capitalism in 1949 introducing a more 'decentralised' version of 'workers' self-management' with the state as the guarantor. Rather than providing real workers' control of production and direct democracy, Tito's reforms provided an illusion and smokescreen for his iron grip on power. This contradiction was exposed in the 1970s following neo-liberal restructuring resulting in mass unemployment, massive international debt, declining real wages, triple-digit inflation and ethnic conflict becoming rife.

Like Cuba, the Venezuelan government has also appropriated and expanded the co-operative sector. Writing in the latest edition of the *Spark* (the magazine of the ICTU Youth), Stephen Nolan points out that '[I]n 1998 there were 800 cooperatives ... in 2006 there were 100,000 involving 1.5 million citizens operating under either state, co-operative or mixed ownership.'

However, the reality between fact and fiction in terms of lip service to 'participatory' democracy and incompatibility between the state and genuine self-management is revealed in an article by Shawn Hattingh of the South African Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front: '[F]ar from being havens that are nurturing worker self-management, state-owned enterprises in Venezuela are marked by relations of domination, oppression and exploitation. The state has even, at times, tried to undermine the ability of workers to challenge bad working conditions and poor wages. It, consequently, matters little whether the state or a capitalist owns a factory, workers still do not have power or direct democracy in the workplace. "Co-management" and other state schemes have often become a way for the state to exploit workers even further, including pushing through aspects of lean production, casualisation and outsourcing. Such relations and practices are not marginal matters. In a society where there is a hierarchical and oppressive pattern in the relations of production, genuine socialism does not and cannot exist. Oppressive relations of production are a common denominator in all class based societies, including Venezuela.' (<http://www.anarkismo.net/article/22640>)

Workers' democracy?

Workers' co-operatives depend on wider market forces to survive and grow and cannot exist outside of capitalist social relations due to the pressures of market forces and competition. Like private enterprises, co-operatives are also subject to the same pressures such as layoffs, price

risers and reduction in wages and in the process reducing any resemblance of 'workers' democracy.'

In examining the question of co-operatives, it is worth noting that Mikhail Bakunin argued that: 'The various forms of co-operation are incontestably one of the most equitable and rational ways of organising the future system of production. But before it can realise its aim of emancipating the labouring masses so that they will receive the full product of their labour, the land and all forms of capital must be converted into collective property. As long as this is not accomplished, the cooperatives will be overwhelmed by the all-powerful competition of monopoly capital and vast landed property ... and even in the unlikely event that a small group of cooperatives should somehow surmount the competition, their success would only beget a new class of prosperous co-operators in the midst of a poverty-stricken mass of proletarians.'

Using his observation and study of the co-operative movement in post-apartheid South Africa, Oliver Nathan, from the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front points out the dilemma between the ideals of the co-operative and the market realities of the day: '[M]ost co-operatives then have faced high levels of degeneration from their initial goals, those of market success — paying their membership a living wage — and internal democracy. Worker co-operatives in the post-apartheid dispensation should be understood to be survivalist in that they are often only able to pay their members a marginal wage at irregular intervals, due to their often marginal presence in the market. Members often have to find alternative sources of employment or rely on family and community networks to support them.' (<http://libcom.org/library/worker-co-operatives-markets-south-african-state>)

The role of social centres

Workers' co-operatives and social centres are often part of the same political furniture sharing the same space and project. For example, the Na Croisbhealí café in Belfast takes its inspiration from the popular Youth Houses in the Basque country and grew out of Belfast youth assembly. Aiming 'to politicise, educate, and self-empower the people of Belfast and Ireland so that they are not held hostage by the arms of capitalism and right wing thought. The co-op organises events which try to enhance culture, political thought, awareness and to raise money for certain causes or other events. We see the space as social and open to all comrades who would like to take advantage of it. We have had different political groups, unions and other organisations organise events and fundraisers. The space has held film showings, AGMs and language classes, we aim to improve these events and also to organise a library and other educational aspects with a future view of having a functioning outreach section of the co-operative.' (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/belfast-interview-croisbhealai-workers-co-operative>)

While Na Croisbhealí provides a positive space to organise and agitate, it remains unclear whether it can replicate the success and influence of the Basque and wider Iberian model, especially given the contrast in political and social circumstances in terms of the lack of a social movement

in Belfast, and the confusion of 'progressive left-wing politics' with everything from Leninism to Stalinism.

While it is essential to retain an internationalist perspective, the fetish for every 'anti-imperialist' struggle under the sun should not be at the expense of building links and solidarity with workers and communities here across the sectarian divide.

On the other hand the Just Books Collective have more of an established presence in Belfast stretching back to the opening of the original shop in Winetavern Street (located deliberately between the bottom of the Falls and Shankill), by the Belfast Anarchist Collective, in June 1978 without any state subsidy. Although the shop closed in 1994, it still continues to provide stalls at events and in the future aims to establish a working-class resource and solidarity centre, including a centre for community and labour education.

Also in Belfast is a workers' co-operative run on a self-managed basis which is currently piloting a labour and education project — Just Learning — in communities across the city, believing that it is important to promote alternatives based on mutual aid, class politics, self-help and co-operation.

The social centre concept has taken root most successfully in Italy, beginning in the 1970s. Large factories and even abandoned military barracks have been 'appropriated' for use as social centres. There are today dozens of social centres in Italy and worryingly several fascist social centres have emerged such as Casa Pound.

Social centres have taken different political and cultural dimensions including both squatted and rented, and are located in most European cities and all corners of the globe. I have visited social centres in Barcelona, Israel, New Zealand, Australia, Greece, Basque Country, to name a few, providing me with a degree of knowledge about and experience of them.

In Ireland, apart from the Warzone centre and Na Croisbheall in Belfast there is the Seomra Spraoi autonomous social space in Dublin, which hosts Workers' Solidarity Movement (WSM) offices, and Solidarity Books in Cork.

Basque Country

After the death of Franco in the mid 1970s, there was an explosion in social radicalism and youth rebellion in the Basque country. Squats, free radios and youth assemblies resulted in the formation of Youth Houses (Gaztetxeak) and provided an expression of this struggle for change through building a Basque political culture combining an anti-authoritarian radicalism with values of self-organisation and self-management. According to Eoin O'Broin, who has written extensively on Basque youth movements, '[D]espite great energy on the part of the state to crush this movement, twenty years on it survives, stronger and more sophisticated than ever.' (Matxinada: Basque Nationalism & Radical Basque Youth Movements)

The emergence of social centres in the late 1970s can be linked to the political and social circumstances of the era

and the potential for revolutionary change. Social centres can be rooted in an even earlier period of workers' and union clubs which spread across Europe at the turn of the twentieth century providing a pivotal role and function within the emerging militant workers' movement.

The formation of ateneu (athenaeum) in Barcelona during this period added to the growing grassroots social infrastructure, comprising the influential anarchist union of the CNT (National Federation of Labour), newspapers, cultural associations and social clubs, moulding a working-class culture built on mutual aid and direct action. These popular cultural and social centres increased in number to 75 by 1984 responding to the genuine need of workers in their locality for support of their social agitation. Each ateneu offered a range of services and leisure including talks, library and education; providing tuition in writing and grammar schools, conveying a culture of action and mobilisation rather than reliance on local authorities.

Conclusion

To some extent today's social centres mark a departure from this radical labour tradition in terms of their composition, locality and outlook. Newer social centres often come across as insular 'activist ghettos', divorced from the concrete needs and experiences of the class, which is rather distinct from the essence of past social centres which have been more about providing an open and accessible space as well as a forum for education and agitation.

While Ireland is yet to develop the same dynamic and level of a co-operative movement as their international counterparts, it is important that we reflect and analyse this avenue before we embark along this path. Workers' co-operatives do play a useful function in highlighting the possibility of workers' co-operation without bosses, providing a forum for debate and a temporary relief from unemployment. But this does not mean that we should forget their ultimate futility in challenging the capitalist system. The building of a workers' co-operative movement cannot be a substitute for a revolutionary strategy based on collective working-class action and the ultimate expropriation of the power and wealth of the capitalist class.

Where we realise our own class power, we can finally take control of our lives, making our communities and workplaces free from exploitation, alienation and oppression, based on the principles of libertarian communism. We cannot self-manage capitalism in our own interests as it is automatically weighted against workers. The only way we can really live without exploitation and bosses is not by internalising them but by abolishing capitalism and its protector — the state. In the North and across Ireland this means working within the workers' movement and community struggles, building an infrastructure of social centres, cultural associations and propaganda outlets and arming ourselves with the rich traditions of class struggle anarchism; with a revolutionary class struggle libertarian movement that will bury the politics of the past and build the politics of the living.

Sean Matthews

The Global Financial Crisis and Beyond

an interview with Professor Frank Stillwell

"Everywhere from the Financial Times to the Sacramento Bee the talk is that the mining boom is over, that China is not going to stimulate its own economy in the manner it did last time; that the forward looking indicators of global growth are parlous. Australia has gone in a short space of time from the lucky country to the country whose luck is running out."

Those are the words of Greg McKenna, chief investment strategist for Macro Investor and I could have taken a similar quote from a number of investment analysts and economists who are currently very scared about the trajectory of the Australian economy, particularly the mining sector.

Someone who's been following the economic developments in Australia from a political economist's perspective is Professor Frank Stillwell. He's been teaching at university for over 40 years, he's currently at the University of Sydney and author of a number of books, "The Accord and Beyond", "Reshaping Australia", "Changing Track - A new political and economic direction for Australia" and many others. Indymedia reporter Alex Whisson had the opportunity to speak with Professor Stillwell to discuss the future of the Australian economy and related questions.

Alex Whisson: Last month Xstrata and BHP Billiton announced 900 job losses at a number of coal mines in New South Wales and Queensland and since March, 3500 jobs have been cut in the mining sector overall. Earlier this month Standard and Poor's released a report which suggested Fortescue Metal Group in particular is vulnerable to the drop in the iron ore spot price. How do you see the mining sector fairing in the short to medium term and what impact do you see the "collapse in the mining sector" as some would describe it, on the Australian economy as a whole?

Professor Frank Stillwell: There's no question that in recent years the mining boom has been a tremendous boost to the economy as a whole and it has depended upon of course our fortuitous endowment of those precious resources but also of course on the buoyant prices on world markets. (But) things have taken a pretty nasty turn from that point of view. The revenues are falling, the investments will fall and some companies such as Fortescue have managed to survive after looking quite vulnerable to the prospect of crashing. There are big job losses. Mind you the mining industry doesn't employ all that many people relative to other sectors in the Australian economy; only 1 in 50 people works in the mining sector, but a downturn of this kind has a lot of indirect effects, if only because it cuts government tax revenues and that means the likelihood of more stringent expenditure cuts that will have adverse effects on other people and other sectors of the economy.

AW: That leads me onto my next question: the Campbell Newman government in Queensland has of course recently brought down what is commonly known in Australia as

a horror budget with 14,000 public sector jobs being lost and everything from Indigenous education programs to the Premier's literary awards getting the axe. Regardless of who wins next year's election, how likely is it that we'll see austerity budgets in the Federal arena (albeit perhaps not on the scale of what we've seen in Greece and Spain)?

FS: I don't think austerity budgets are a necessary response to the end of the mining boom any more than the politics of austerity makes a logical response to the Global Financial Crisis of a few years back. Yet that's how neo-liberal governments seem to have responded; certainly in Britain, Spain and Greece, we're seeing an attempt to resolve problems of economic crisis by more austerity. The greatest economist of the 20th century, John Maynard Keynes is surely turning in his grave, because it's clear that you can't actually create more buoyant economic conditions through government expenditure cuts. The world just doesn't work like that, notwithstanding the wishes of neoliberals to do so. But this has become rightly or wrongly the dominant political response, in other words, far from seeing an end to neo-liberalism as a result of the global financial turmoil, we're seeing it resurgent in this new form and certainly Newman's policies in Queensland and O'Farrell's in New South Wales are portents of what we might expect to see from a government led by Tony Abbot were that to be elected next year. But even if the Gillard government manages to hang on I think we'll see that trapped into more austerity measures too, if only because of Wayne Swan's commonly repeated pledge to run a budget surplus. When the economy is taking a downward turn it's very difficult to generate a budget surplus other than by carrying out those austerity measures that actually create more problems in the medium term.

"We're not going to cop the politics of austerity. We want policies that put ordinary working peoples' interests before those of global corporations and big banks"

AW: Indeed it is remarkable to see in the European context for instance many conservative economists pointing out what is self-evident -- that austerity budgets will not stimulate the economy and create employment and so forth and equally remarkable to see someone of the ilk of Clive Palmer actually criticise the Newman budget on the same basis. So if austerity budgets are not going to get Australia out of what many see as an economic hole around the corner, how much of this is ideological? How much of it is just doctrinaire neo-liberal economics without really much thought or regard to whether or not such austerity budgets are beneficial to the economy let alone beneficial to ordinary people?

FS: There have always been those two elements in right-wing political responses to economic difficulty. In part, as you say it's ideological, a belief that somehow if we could revitalise the free market, then capitalism would provide

the answers. But there is that more pragmatic business-oriented approach which recognises the very important role for government in providing infrastructure, in helping to stimulate the economy in periods of recession through expansionary fiscal policy or cutting the prevailing interest rate through the Reserve Bank. So it's a real tension for people on the political right as to whether to go with the ideology or with the more pragmatic response that one could actually deliver improved economic outcomes including for the businesses. But I prefer not just to sit and watch these two currents work themselves through. I think it's equally important to posit more positive alternatives that could actually provide a more sustainable future, but those alternatives typically involve more reliance upon government planning, on development, for example of a national investment fund so as not to be so vulnerable to the volatility of international financial markets. In brief it involves a more thoroughly social democratic emphasis on planning rather than on global market principles.

AW: Indeed, and we did see that ever so brief renaissance of Keynesian supply-side economics in the immediate wake of the global economic crisis back in the 2008, 2009 period. And as you say we've returned now to neo-liberal orthodoxy. Why is it that when Keynesian economic policy and national infrastructure projects and the like designed to stimulate economic activity actually make a good deal of sense even in conventional bourgeois economic terms, that the senior policy makers in Australia shy away from those sorts of broad Snowy River type industrial schemes with the exception perhaps of the national broadband scheme, we're not seeing any of that kind of economic thinking in Australia.

FS: I'm a fairly pragmatic economist – I like to see what works and do more of that. (During) the Global Financial Crisis, the policies introduced by the government led then by Kevin Rudd emphasising giving households more spending power; a stronger role for government in providing financial guarantees within the in the financial system. In other words, a combination of fiscal stimulus and financial regulation did the trick. I mean frankly, Australia was the envy of the world at the time and has since been one of the best performing economies. Although, partly that's due to the effect of the mining boom but one flowed into the other and for a while there it was all looking very good. And frankly I think could have continued were it not

for strange hangovers of neo-liberal policy such as Wayne Swann's commitment to running a budget surplus or at least a balanced budget. That doesn't actually make a sense in these difficult economic circumstances. Now of course in the longer term you would want to run balanced budgets over a whole period of an economic cycle. You can't go on running deficits forever. You've got to create the good times. You're more likely to do that through a national investment scheme for example. Think of that trillion dollars plus in the workers' superannuation schemes. If we systemically mobilised that for investment in key sectors to keep creating green jobs and a more sustainable economy, then we would be in a sense taking control of our futures in a way that kicks off that Keynesian basis and actually produces more economic growth and more likelihood of good tax revenues and government expenditures in the medium term but somehow or other all that seems to be regarded as a bit unacceptably leftfield. Maybe that's because the understanding of economic issues has been so crippled by neo-classical thinking as it's been taught in the universities for so many decades.

AW: Now you're certainly not going out of business any time soon as a political economist given so many of the key events in the last couple of years from the Arab Spring to the Greek general strikes to the Occupy movement, have been in whole or in part manifestations of and reactions to a period of global economic crisis. How do you see things panning out in Australia? Is it outlandish do you think, that we may have a revival of industrial working class militancy in this country or a large scale Occupy type movement if and we when neoliberal austerity measures really begin to hit home?

FS: Given that Australia has been relatively sheltered compared say with the United States, with many countries in Europe, particularly southern Europe, then I think we're unlikely to see those things starting here but if you observe what's happening in some of those countries where the economic crisis has been deeper, you can certainly see a deeper questioning of capitalism – a mobilisation of people saying "hey we're not going to cop the politics of austerity. We want policies that put ordinary working peoples' interests before those of global corporations and big banks".

And so I think we're seeing a welling up of the demand for a more left-wing politics than I've seen for much of my lifetime and that's quite a long period. It's not as if there is a coherent push for an alternative but there's much more questioning; there's a broader array of social movements. Some are coming out of the unions, some coming out of more anarchist origins, others coming out of more green and environmental concerns or social justice concerns. If all that can come together, then we're really talking about the prospect of a real change in the political economic culture, a real opening up of alternative political economic futures.

Interview conducted by Alex Whisson
Perth Indymedia radio
7pm Monday on RTRFM 92.1
www.rtrfm.com.au/shows/indymedia
www.perthindymedia.org



What Is Violence, Anyway?

The state has been granted through law and our complicity, the legitimacy of a monopoly on legitimate violence. In the world of media spectacle and false representation violence has taken on an uncertain form. The active oppression of marginalised groups is not seen for what it is — violent — but rather a lawful action performed in the interests of society. Yet the peaceful action of protesters is easily misrepresented as militant and violent.

The idea of legitimate force highlights a contradiction in our understanding and use of the term violence. By using of the term violence to describe the actions of protesters, the plethora of systematic violence that already exists in society and in the power dynamics between police and protesters is excluded, ignoring the contradictions of the limited and unidirectional construction of violence and misplacing the label of violence on the signifier (the presence of dissent) not on the signified (the use of oppressive physical or psychological force).

The state has come to realise that protest will never go away, that dissent at the inequity of the current capitalist system will always exist. Their initial attempts at repressing this dissent resulted in dismal failure, and with this realisation their tactics were recast.

The police and media work in conjunction to construct pacified protest groups as legitimate avenues of dissent. The state offers members, or elements, of these groups the ability to police the actions of protesters from within, by crediting them as legitimate. Pacified activists are able to censor, marginalise and exclude

activists who are willing to engage in a diversity of tactics. This constructs a moral hierarchy and internal censorship that acts to shelter the state from elements of dissent that it is unable to co-opt or manage. This results in activism becoming ultimately ineffective and demoralising. The persistent use of mass protest in the face of the continued failure of mass protest highlights this.

This intersection of the state's authority, false media representation and glorification of pacified protest all serve to vilify those who are willing to engage in a diversity of tactics. This vilification renders their actions illegitimate, menacing, and in doing so positions the protesters as 'legitimate' targets for police brutality.

The cult of pacified reformism encourages state intervention by centering all power and responsibility for change in the hands of the government. To petition is not now nor ever will be empowering. To petition is to rely on the legitimised violence of the state. Meaning that complicit acceptance of the existing power structures reinforce and further legitimises state violence. This couples the actions of pacified protesters with state violence and blurs the barrier between complicity and participation. Requiring a relabeling of the so called non-violence of these protesters actions. Pacified reformism involving state action is inherently violent.

The question that must be asked then; does the use of violence by protesters serve to reinforce or counteract state violence? And ultimately — is the use of violence worth it?

We do not need pacifism, that much is clear. Rather, we need an unpacified resistance that refuses the discourse of legitimisation. We need the ability to enter into effective forms of dissent, free from the limiting ideology of pacifism. And we need the support of allies in the fight against capitalism, as we are willing to support their actions regardless of the shape they take.

This is not a time to talk semantics. We are facing the enclosing police state, imminent ecocide and runaway global warming. Now is not the time for an endless debate about the necessity of legitimacy. It is the time for solidarity and effective action in all shapes and forms.



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the smiles of brown skin
laced with chai
falafel
and hashish
welcome companionship
among hard faces
on the autobahn
the sun warming
foreign chests
the light rhythm
of turkish techno
freeing bodies
heavy with cargo
'deutschland —> italia'
hands directing
without language
'no problem'
'yes, no problem'
the three men hug
and for a moment
celebrate the friendship
found in the silence
between a and b

DUMBED DOWN YOUTH



WE WATCHED
WAY TOO MUCH
TV IT WAS ALL
WIRLWIND, HEAT
AND FLASH WITHIN
A WEEK OUR MINDS
HAD TURNED TO MUSH

SELEKTA 84

at night

Sky Croeser

During the day they are dogs, soft-haired and patient. Misha, cream fur brushed with brown, a little older, a little stronger. Kanka, delicate and red-tinged. Both out of place, dreaming of snow and pine forests as they sleep, snuffling softly, in the small strip of shade on the high-walled patio. They never bark. They watch carefully. They watch as the students trickle out in the morning, bleary-eyed, towards school. Chinese couples driving past to find parking as they go to dinner. The gentle rhythms of the mosque, families going to prayer. The tall blonde man and his dog, the woman who mutters to herself and wears torn dresses, the backpackers and the drunks and the daydreamers. Misha sometimes makes a small noise in the back of her throat, barely audible, but mostly they are silent.

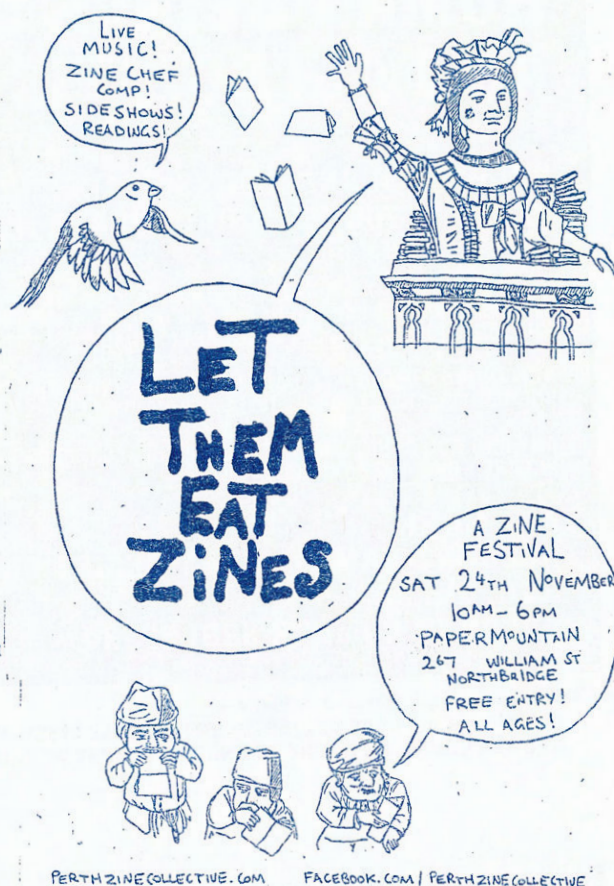
At night they peel off their fur. If you've heard stories of selkies and werewolves, fox-witches, you might picture this as an easy process, like letting your clothes fall to your feet as you undress for a lover. It is not. Each time they pull off their fur it hurts terribly. They nuzzle at their stomachs, nip, use their paws to pull and push, trying to be silent so that the people inside the house won't wake. Their fur falls in a bloody pile, wet and heavy, and their skin feels raw.

They climb the fence, checking carefully beforehand, an echo of their daytime hours, and find the clothes they have hidden. They walk the streets, staring too long at people as they pass on the pavement. Even the large men who walk in groups step aside for them, uncomfortable, finding a sudden reason to look at the other side of the road as if a pretty woman had just walked by. They don't go inside much, but sometimes they linger in the piazza or the park, curled up against each other as if they were lovers, smelling the cigarettes and sweat and feelings of the people around them.

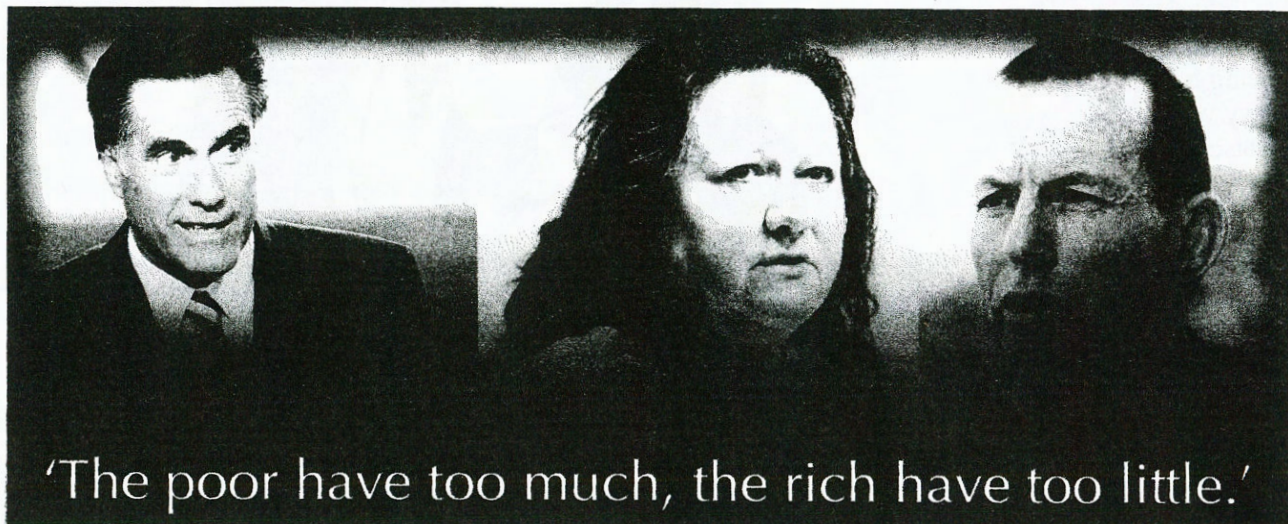
Sometimes they hunt, although never for flesh.

They are always back by dawn, pressing themselves uncomfortably back into their skins, licking the dried fur from the patio bricks, grooming each other carefully so that their fur lies flat again.

AUNTY MABEL & THE PERTH ZINE COLLECTIVE PRESENT



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Mystic Michelle's Misanthropic Horoscopes

Aquarius — "You say you want a revolution."

Without wanting to undervalue the power of temper tantrums, perhaps it's time you took a more strategic approach to the undoing of capitalism. Stamping your feet, whilst cute, is not so effective. This week, romance comes wearing a bowler hat, one fake eyelash and nothing else.

Pisces — "Revolution only needs good dreamers who remember their dreams."

It's hard remembering things isn't it? Your keys, your wallet, doing up your fly. It's better that you don't agree to doing any tasks at meetings this week, because you'll just forget to do them. Just keep being dreamily you, and one day the revolution will come. You'll probably sleep right through it.

Aries — "The only way to support a revolution is to make your own."

Yes Aries. Yes. You are it. And you know it. Just pout a little honey. And turn. And turn. Hold it. You are the poster-child. You are the revolution. Without you we're nothing. Nothing. Good luck comes in an old Rammstein song played loud.

Taurus — "Ask for work. If they don't give you work, ask for bread. If they do not give you work or bread, then take bread."

It's a nice look you got going there. Call it what you will — zaftig, "bursting with love". Either way it's never a bad thing. Besides, extra padding helps when the cops throw you inside. Expect an old friend who smells of garlic to drop past jail.

Gemini — "The first duty of a revolutionary is to get away with it."

Embrace the clever, scheming little devil that you are. Revel in your underhanded, mercurial wiliness. Because everyone else will pretty much think you're evil this week. Love might come if you eat your crusts.

Cancer — "You are not permitted to suffer what others suffer, you are not permitted to fail or die young."

Your tendency to be indirect has only the effect of no-one ever knowing what you mean. Incorporating your little side stepping movements into an interpretive dance to punk music will reap extra anarchist cred this week.

Leo — "Each of you must decide where you stand. All we ask is that you refuse to kneel. You are the people. You have the power. Open your eyes. Open your minds. Then close the fingers on your hand."

Have you ever walked beneath a streetlight and it has flashed on and off? Have you ever watched a CCTV camera follow you? That's because it is all about you, Leo. Now bring it. Filling out your dole diary this week will be unexpectedly joyous.

Virgo — "Everything under heaven is in utter chaos; the situation is excellent."

It's really hard being perfect, isn't it Virgo? Holding life tightly in your little fist, your gimlet eyes gleaming with thoughts of your Master Plan. This week, ease up, kick back, chillax in front of the TV where you will find the revolution will in fact be televised, provided you have paid your Foxtel bill (well of course you have Virgo, you have paid up in advance haven't you?).

Libra — "Revolution does have to be violent precisely because the Pharaoh won't let you go. If the Pharaoh would let you go, the revolution won't have to be violent."

Time to charge your batteries, oil your joints and march to the barricades, Libra. Robots to the front! We could all use your charm during weeks like this. Good luck comes in a can of wasabi peas.

Scorpio — "Don't just survive while waiting for someone's revolution to clear your head."

You know that person who you think is an agent provocateur? They're just a dipshit. Stop pulling Hong Kongs and get on the turps instead. You're much more fun drunk.

Sagittarius — "Revolution begins in putting on bright colours."

You know how you used to be vegetarian, then you became vegan and now you're a green juice, raw foodist? You're actually a bit hungry. The stars say your good fortune comes in a steak sanger and chips this week.

Capricorn — "You show me a capitalist, and I'll show you a bloodsucker."

Your dreams of swimming in a pool of money like some duck from a cartoon are a little juvenile ... unless that money is donated to an anarchist collective. In that case, bring on the pool of money. You will look very comely in a pale blue dressing gown all of this week.



Get involved!

The unnamed collective is always looking for new folks to get involved. Aside from producing Avenue we organise the odd happening, creative intervention, direct action and generally hang out. The collective meets weekly, e-mail: avenue.perth@gmail.com for the details.



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